

# Onizuka ORBITER

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## Onizuka grieves deaths of Shuttle Columbia crewmembers

by Valerie Joseph  
Public Affairs

Onizuka Air Force Station employees are grieving, along with the rest of the space community, the tragic loss of the crew of Space Shuttle Columbia, who were killed when the orbiter disintegrated upon re-entry to Earth Feb. 1.

Members of the 21st Space Operations Squadron, as they have with every shuttle mission to date, performed voice and data routing operations between Johnson Space Center in Houston and the space shuttle.

Squadron members perform "bent pipe" operations, providing NASA access to the Air Force Satellite Control Network. The AFSCN is a communications conduit for DOD, NASA, and other allied and commercial satellites essentially consisting of two control nodes (Onizuka and Schriever AFB), which in turn control eight remote tracking stations.

For this mission the squadron's Satellite Operations Center used the remote tracking stations to passively track the shuttle. In addition, the SOC configured the RTSS to route

shuttle recorder data via the AFSCN to Johnson Space Center.

During the course of the 16-day mission, 21 SOPS used seven of the eight tracking stations for shuttle support and provided 232 contacts with Columbia.



Capt. Christopher Collins was one of five people in the SOC overseeing operations on the day of the tragedy.

Collins said the last support of the mission was five minutes prior to NASA's loss of signal from the shuttle.

"As it got closer to landing, communication from JSC became more and more quiet," he said, "which gave us an uneasy feeling that something may be wrong.

"About two minutes after the scheduled touchdown, NASA officials announced a contingency to collect all materials relating to Columbia. This told us something catastrophic had

happened to the shuttle."

At this point Collins and the rest of the mission control team began securing log books, orbital analysis data and other equipment associated with the mission.

Lt. Col. Sandra Finan, 21 SOPS commander, said those in the SOC performed admirably despite growing indications that the shuttle was gone.

"The men and women of Onizuka have a long and proud history of support to the shuttle program," she said. "In the final moments of the Shuttle Columbia's flight, 21 SOPS was again tracking them, ready to provide support within seconds of any request.

"Minutes later, as it became clear that something was wrong, through the sadness and shock, our people immediately took action to preserve every bit of data we had on the mission. The professionalism of each individual was impressive. It is this professionalism that has made outstanding contributions to every space shuttle mission.

"Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of the seven astronauts. We are proud to have been a part of their mission."



Col. Rick Husband  
Cmdr. William McCool

### IN REMEMBRANCE Crew of Space Shuttle Columbia

Capt. David Brown  
Lt. Col. Michael Anderson  
Dr. Kalpana Chawla



Cmdr. Laural Blair  
Col. Ilan Ramon

# Base members donate “gift of life”

by Valerie Joseph  
Public Affairs

Blood – the gift of life. That’s what members of Onizuka Air Force Station selflessly donated to scores of people they’ve never met.

American Red Cross workers were here Feb. 3 for a combined blood and bone marrow drive to collect blood and to register people in the National Bone Marrow Registry.

At the end of the day-long event, 45 units of whole blood had been donated, and 21 people were registered as potential bone marrow donors.

Although approximately 60 people signed up to donate blood, a number of them were deferred from donating for reasons such as having spent three to six months in countries affected by mad cow disease or various medical conditions.

Red Cross charge nurse Cynthia Miller declared the drive a success.

“We met our goal,” she said. “The people of Onizuka are a generous group.”

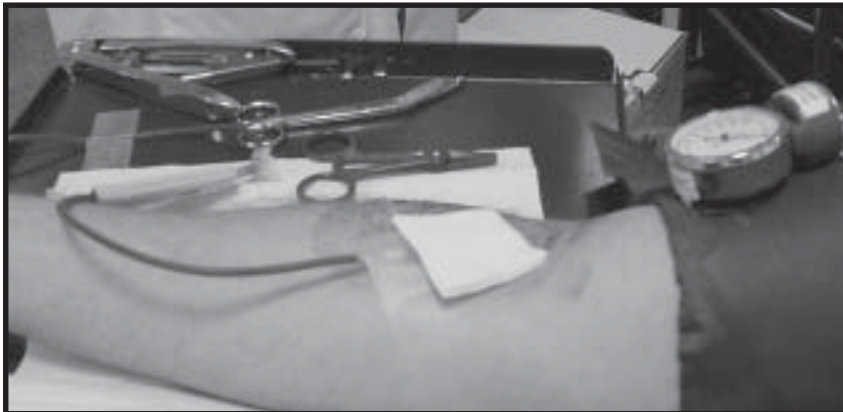
In the United States a blood transfusion is needed about every two seconds, according to Red Cross officials. Approximately 5 percent of the eligible population in the U.S. donates blood; in California the average is less than 3 percent.

Each blood donation may help save the life of more than one person. Blood may be transfused as whole blood or as one of its components. Because patients seldom require all of the components (red blood cells, platelets, plasma) of whole blood, it makes sense to transfuse only that portion

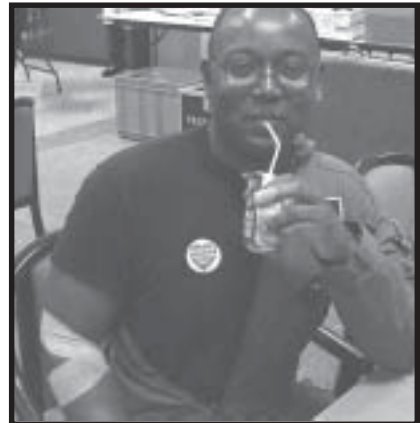


**Wendy, a phlebotomist with the American Red Cross, prepares Capt. Jim Sikra, OD-4, for his blood donation. More than 40 units of blood were collected from base members during a blood and bone marrow drive here Feb. 3. (photos by Valerie Joseph)**

needed by the patient for a specific condition or disease. This treatment, referred to as “blood component therapy,” allows several patients to benefit from one unit of donated whole blood.



**Vital blood is collected from a donor. The Red Cross estimates 116,506 units of blood are needed each year to meet the needs of Bay Area hospitals.**



**Capt. Jerry Joseph, 21 SOPS, sips juice following his blood donation.**

## Volunteers available to assist taxpayers

It's tax time again, and a group of Onizukans have completed federal and state income tax training for this year's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. The following people are available to assist in preparation of individual tax returns: Jeannie Hamel, ext. 4975; John Mele, ext. 3265 or 3820; Guy Ong, ext. 6632; Brian Ireland, ext. 4820; Les Galam, ext. 3398; Anthony Williams, ext. 3151; Staff Sgt. David Snarr, 744-2507; Master Sgt. Rudy

Tabar, 548-1223; and Tech. Sgt Keith Simmons, 744-2002.

Electronic filing will be available for both federal and California state returns. Some tax forms and booklets will be available in the main lobby or use the following Web sites: Federal, [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov); California state, [www.ftb.ca.gov](http://www.ftb.ca.gov); Other states, [www.taxadmin.org/fta/forms.ssi](http://www.taxadmin.org/fta/forms.ssi); IRS and California site, [www.taxes.ca.gov](http://www.taxes.ca.gov).

# 'Emergency data cards' move to Web

by Maj. John Thomas  
Air Force Personnel Center Public Affairs

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AFPN) -- More than a week before its planned launch, the new Web-based 'emergency data card' helped more than 1,000 airmen in Alaska mobilize for a real world deployment.

Scheduled to kick off Jan. 27, the program began early to help airmen deploy from Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, Air Force Personnel Center officials here said. Within the first week, more than 20,000 other people completed the form upon logging onto the virtual military personnel flight on the personnel center's Web site.

Airmen can update their emergency contact information from any Web-connected computer rather than

visiting their military personnel flights.

Called the Virtual Record of Emergency Data, or vRED, the form provides the Air Force with information needed to contact family members if an airman suffers a serious illness or injury or dies while on active duty.

The vRED replaces the Department of Defense Form 93, Record of Emergency Data, and will need to be kept updated individually. The vMPF will prompt airmen to update their emergency data upon login.

Also, local military personnel flights will notify airmen based on location when they must sign on and establish their initial electronic form, said Maj. Jerry Couvillion, chief of the casualty services branch here. The transition is expected to last until

June; however, people at remote locations without Internet access can still use paper copies of the form.

"The biggest advantage is convenience for the customer," he said. "People won't have to stand in line at the MPF to make simple changes to their contact information."

The innovation comes as the Air Force increases its number of deployed airmen, said Maj. Gen. Thomas O'Riordan, personnel center commander.

"Updating emergency data is important," he said. "It is a crucial part of expeditionary preparation."

Accurate and current family contact information can prevent delays of medical, casualty and death benefits for airmen and family

**See Data, Page 6**

## The accident you can avoid

Most people call them "rear-enders," but as one driver pointed out, it's a "front-ender" if you're the driver whose front end winds up getting smashed. Whether you're the driver in the front or the back, rear-end collisions are far too common. However, these are accidents that can usually be avoided if you, the driver in the rear, take a few precautions. Here are some tips to help keep you out of trouble and your car out of the body shop:

Stay alert for sudden stops. Expect the driver in front of you to stop anywhere, at any time. After all, there is a chance he or she can see highway obstacles or even traffic problems blocked from your view.

Stay ahead of the situation. Watch the traffic and keep an eye on the side roads. If possible, look far ahead – something that will be easier to do if you're not tailgating. Often you'll spot traffic conditions or road obstacles, which may force the driver ahead of you to stop suddenly. Also watch out for:

- Vehicles entering from side roads or ramps.
- Traffic signals ahead.
- Someone cutting into your lane up ahead. Whether they cut off the car in front of you or another driver two or three cars further ahead, the driver(s) ahead will have to slow down to avoid a collision.
- Road repairs ahead. When you see signs warning of road construction, immediately begin slowing down and allow more following distance. The road may be rough and

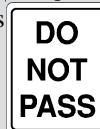
uneven and your lane may suddenly slow down or stop. In rural areas, livestock can sometimes wander onto the roadway and pose a hazard to drivers.

Someone tailgates you. Sometimes road conditions make it impossible for a hurried driver to pass you or for you to pull over. When you've got someone glued to your back bumper, try the following tips:

- Increase your following distance from the car in front of you even more than normal. You're going to have to slow down more gradually than usual to give the vehicle behind more time to react and slow down safely.
- Don't suddenly jump on the brakes to "teach that tailgater a lesson." The driver behind you may be impaired by alcohol or drugs. Or, the vehicle may be in poor mechanical condition, such as worn-out brakes. Worse yet, your actions could provoke an incident of road rage. So keep your cool, and allow more time and space ahead to react to unexpected road or traffic conditions.

-- Periodically check your brake and turn signal lights to make sure they're working. You want drivers behind you – especially those following too closely – to know what you're about to do.

-- If you're at a stoplight, leave a space of one car length ahead of you. If you see you're about to be rear-ended, take your foot off the brake and allow the impact to push your car forward into that space. This will reduce the force of the impact and can help reduce the severity of the injuries to yourself and your passengers. It can also help reduce the damage to your vehicle.





## *Breathe deeply:* Team receives disaster prep training



**Capt. Veronica Calligan, 21st Space Operations Squadron, tries on self-contained breathing apparatus during a training session Jan. 29.**

T.C. Smith, Onizuka's disaster preparedness coordinator, assists Staff Sgt. Shawn Gaines, OD-4, with the adjustment on his harness. Approximately 20 base members underwent training to aid the base's disaster preparedness multi-purpose support team in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. The volunteers have undergone damage assessment, search and rescue, and bomb search training. Familiarity with SCBAs will protect team members from more than 100 types of contaminants, including chlorine, hydrogen chloride and sulfur dioxide.

*(photos by Valerie Joseph)*



## **DOD tests stateside Space-A travel**

SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE, Ill. (AFPN) -- Defense transportation officials recently announced a one-year test to expand space-available travel privileges to family members traveling within the continental United States. The test will begin April 1 and continue through March 31.

Dependents of active-duty and retired military people will soon be able to travel "Space A" aboard military flights when accompanied by their sponsors, according to John Lundeby from the Air Mobility Command passenger policy branch.

The only change is that family members can now fly on flights within the United States under the same eligibility category as their sponsor, he said.

Lundeby explained that in December 2000 the commander of U.S. Transportation Command outlined the proposal as a way to improve quality-of-life benefits for military service people and their families.

After review, defense officials approved a one-year test.

"Current regulations prohibit dependents from flying space available within the CONUS," said Lundeby. "This privilege was available only to active-

duty and retired military people. During the test period, dependents can accompany them."

Retirees may sign up for this program 60 days in advance but not before the test officially begins April 1. To register for space-available travel, active-duty sponsors must be on leave or a pass and remain in the status while awaiting travel and through the entire travel period.

Additional Space-A travel and sign-up information is available through AMC's public Web site at <http://public.scott.af.mil/index.html>.  
*(Courtesy of AMC News Service)*

## NEWS NOTES

### Golf clinics

The Moffett Golf Course is holding free golf clinics this month. "Fundamentals of Golf Swing" will be held Feb. 13 from 4 to 5 p.m. at the driving range, and "Rules of Golf" will be held Feb. 17 from 4 to 5 p.m. at the snack bar.

Both classes are great for beginner golfers, and no equipment is needed. Call 650-603-8026 for more information.



### Racquetball tournament

The fitness center at Onizuka Air Force Station is sponsoring a racquetball tournament March 3. The event is open to all employees of the base. Entry deadline is Feb. 18, and a tournament meeting will be held Feb. 24 at the Space Place. To register contact Barclay Brown at ext. 3999 or via e-mail.

### Gumbo cook-off

Sign up for the great gumbo cook-off Feb. 27, 11 a.m., at the Space Place. Deadline to enter is Feb. 21. Contact Hattie Jenkins, ext. 3697; Ted Williams, ext. 3034; or Rose Beamer, ext. 4144. Tickets are \$3 at the door. Proceeds go to the base booster club.

### Military, civilian W-2s available on myPay

Active-duty members and Department of Defense civilians can now view, save and print their W-2 wage and tax statements from myPay at <https://mypay.dfas.mil>. Military retirees and annuitants can view, save and print their tax form 1099s as well.

The myPay service provides a secure way for servicemembers, defense civilians, military retirees and annuitants to manage their pay account information. Available around the clock, customers can make changes online that previously needed to be made by visiting offices.

Customers can also help the Department of Defense save money by volunteering to turn off the print copy of their leave and earnings statements and checking it online. The Defense Department can save up to 34 cents for each LES that is delivered electronically instead of in hard copy form.

### Pets traveling to UK must still be licensed into quarantine

The United Kingdom extended the Pet Travel Scheme in December to include the United States, which means cats and dogs that comply with the rules should be able to enter without spending six months in quarantine.

However, during these initial months when official certification is not available or there are no approved routes and carriers, cats and dogs must first be licensed into quarantine and then owners can apply for early release.

### Information Assurance

February is Information Assurance Awareness month. Mandatory briefings will be held this month for all members of Onizuka Air Force Station who access the Local Area Network.

Briefings last approximately one hour and will be held in the Corona Room on the following dates: Feb. 18, 1 p.m.; Feb. 19, 7 a.m.; Feb. 20, 1 p.m.; Feb. 24, 7 a.m.; Feb. 25, 2 p.m.; and Feb. 26, 2 p.m.

If you have questions or cannot attend any of these sessions, contact Lou Mata at ext. 6655.

### Junior Achievement

Junior Achievement volunteers are needed now! Junior Achievement introduces business, economic and personal success skills to students in kindergarten through high school. Become a JA volunteer and share valuable knowledge. It only takes enthusiasm, life experience and a willingness to teach. Junior Achievement provides the training, curriculum and a classroom full of students. If interested contact Capt. Dave Learned at 548-1220.

### Scholarships for Military Children a sweet deal for recipients

Valentine's Day is fast approaching, and the Scholarships for Military Children program has a really "sweet" deal for military children going to college this fall.

Applications for \$1,500 scholarships are due at the nearest commissary by Feb. 21, just after Valentine's Day. At least one scholarship will be awarded at every commissary location with qualified applicants.

Everything a potential applicant needs to know is in the Frequently Asked Questions section of the scholarship page at [www.commissaries.com](http://www.commissaries.com). The application can be downloaded and filled out by hand or filled out on the computer and saved as a file. Applications are also available at commissaries worldwide.

The scholarship essay topic is "How has being the child of a military service member influenced your educational goals?" In past years the essay has been a key factor, along with activities and community involvement, in selecting among the many outstanding applicants.

### Leaders announce new core competencies

Developing airmen, technology-to-warfighting and integrating operations are the three new air and space core competencies. These three elements are fundamental to how the Air Force views itself, how leaders and colleagues view it and how the service develops its capabilities for joint warfighting.

Core competencies form the foundation upon which the Air Force organizes, trains and equips. They form the cornerstones of the service's strength as a military service.

For more information, see the Air Force Print News story at [www.af.mil/news/Jan2003/11603721.shtml](http://www.af.mil/news/Jan2003/11603721.shtml).

**See Pets, Page 6**

## CSAF urges visits to hospitalized veterans

WASHINGTON (AFPN) -- The Air Force chief of staff is urging airmen to share personal Valentine's Day wishes with hospitalized veterans.

"I strongly encourage airmen across the country to spend a few minutes visiting with our hospitalized veterans during Valentine's week," Gen. John P. Jumper said. "One of the most memorable, meaningful and fulfilling experiences you'll ever have is to meet (veterans) and hear their personal stories."

Airmen of all ranks at bases in the United States will participate Feb. 9 to 15 in the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans by visiting their local Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers, outpatient clinics, nursing homes and other veterans' facilities.

"Our great nation is richly blessed with ordinary citizens who, without asking, became heroes because they were willing to make a personal sacrifice to protect and defend the freedoms and security we enjoy today," Jumper said. "This is an endearing and heartfelt way to say 'we care' and 'thank you' to those hospitalized veterans who have served and sacrificed to keep our nation free."

About 50 airmen, including members of the Air Force Band, will travel to the Baltimore VA Medical

Center on Feb. 10, according to Wendy Varhegyi, chief of community relations at Bolling Air Force Base, D.C.

National Salute Week is planned each year to coincide with Valentine's Day because of that date's tradition of sharing and caring, Varhegyi said.

However, honoring the nation's vets should not be confined to just certain days.

"We hope that scheduled events such as this will jump-start people to volunteer in our veteran's facilities throughout the year."

Participation is simple, Varhegyi said. "All that is required is the willingness to share a little time.

"Visits to veterans' facilities usually involve simply talking with them and shaking their hands," she said. "It's about spending a few minutes with each veteran, sharing some kind words, and with this event, delivering balloons and Valentine cards.

Varhegyi said the veterans appreciate seeing military members in uniform and love to share stories with those who can relate and understand what they have sacrificed. The chief of staff agreed.

"This will be time well spent and deeply appreciated by our veterans and their families," Jumper said.

For more information, contact local Veterans Affairs facilities.

leave the United States and enter the United Kingdom without spending six months in quarantine.

For more information, see the Air Force Print News story at [www.af.mil/news/Dec2002/123002467.shtml](http://www.af.mil/news/Dec2002/123002467.shtml).

**CLASSIFIED**  
ADVERTISING

*The Onizuka Orbiter's free classified section is for members of the Onizuka/Moffett communities. To run an ad, fax it to: (408) 752-6082 or e-mail to [valerie.joseph@onizuka.af.mil](mailto:valerie.joseph@onizuka.af.mil).*

### ***Data, from Page 3***

members, officials said. It also avoids hours or days of uncertainty during which casualty teams are sometimes left to track down next of kin.

"That emergency information is essential for our casualty notification teams in case an airman becomes incapacitated or worse yet killed," Couvillion said. "Once the member initially completes the form, they will be able to go in at any time and update specific information as needed. It's simple and saves time."

On the AFPC Web page at [www.afpc.randolph.af.mil](http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil), people can select the "vMPF" logo at the top of the page. New vMPF users will need to establish an account.

The online application, which will take most people about 15 minutes, requires information on relatives and their addresses.

Conveniences include drop-down menus that keep users from having to re-enter addresses common to more than one person, said Couvillion. "And if someone needs to take a break or go home to look up an address, as often happens with this form, they can log off and log back in to the same place in the form where they left off."

For more information about the vMPF, call the Air Force Contact Center at 866-229-7074.

### ***Pets, from Page 5***

Quarantine could be for as little as five days if all procedures are followed. The process includes micro-chipping, followed by a rabies shot and a blood test 30 days later. Six months after a blood test with successful results, the animal can

### **Onizuka Orbiter**

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**21<sup>st</sup> Space Operations Squadron**

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